



COMMITTEE ON  
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STATEMENT

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**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC)  
Republican Leader, Committee on Education and Labor  
Hearing on “*Brown v. Board of Education at 65: A Promise Unfulfilled*”  
April 30, 2019**

Thank you for yielding.

And thank you for convening today's hearing to talk about the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The issue of segregation in schools deserves our full attention, and I welcome this opportunity to discuss how the turning point of *Brown v. Board* has shaped the last 65 years for students across the United States.

Thanks to the relentless courage of Linda Brown, her parents, and civil rights leaders, the abhorrent segregationist policy of “separate but equal” was recognized for what it was: inherently unequal. With the Supreme Court's decision, the nation took a first step toward greater equality and opportunity for all people.

Unfortunately, a first step does not equate to overnight change. We know from history that even after *Brown v. Board*, the majority of segregated schools did not integrate until many years later. Even with the legal barriers to equal education broken, achieving true equality for all students has followed a steep and arduous path.

My Democrat colleagues have largely been critical of the Department of Education's enforcement of civil rights law, but the reality is Secretary DeVos is following the letter and spirit of the law and regulations; the Secretary is thoroughly investigating discrimination claims and acting swiftly when those claims are found to be true. Not only is discrimination and state-sanctioned segregation repugnant and illegal, it also prevents growth and success for all children. Studies have shown that integrated schools promote greater understanding and tolerance, and result in improved educational outcomes, particularly for students of color.

As a former educator and a lifelong learner, I believe with my whole heart that an excellent education is the key to lifelong success. It is the path out of poverty for millions and provides students with the tools and skills they need to build a successful life. All students, regardless of zip code, deserve access to greater educational opportunities.

The legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education* should be to empower parents with the ability to choose the right school for their child and eliminate the ability of the state to consign children to low-performing schools with no means of escape. School choice gives parents and families the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty and enroll their child in an institution that challenges them, develops their skills and intellect, and encourages them to reach higher. Studies show that when students are given the freedom to attend school in a learning environment best suited to their abilities, they graduate from high school and pursue postsecondary education at higher rates. We will hear today about the power of choice to transform lives.

In the 65 years since *Brown v. Board*, we have not yet achieved true equality. We continue to strive towards a future where all students, regardless of race or color, have the chance to succeed. But while there's more work to be done, we have seen some encouraging trends. Between 2010-2011 and 2016-2017, the high school graduation rate for black students increased by 11 percent, more than any other demographic. Additionally, dropout rates for black students declined between 2000 and 2016, while black enrollment and attendance at postsecondary institutions rose over the same period.

Change is slow. Change is too slow. The progress we have made should be understood if it's going to continue. I thank the witnesses before the committee today, and I look forward to our discussion about how we can keep working to secure greater equality, and even greater opportunity, for America's students.

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